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### 'There is a work in the interpretation of the work'

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8000 words max

‘There is a Work in the interpretation of the Work’<sup>1</sup>

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Provide short biographical notes on all contributors here if the journal requires them.

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<sup>1</sup> Craig Richardson, ‘John Latham: Incidental Person’ (2007, pp 27-31)

‘There is a Work in the interpretation of the Work’,

**Abstract:** This paper provides brief context and a critical overview of the video presented as an integral part of this publication. In one hour the video documents excerpts from over five hours of an interdisciplinary seminar at Summerhall in Edinburgh Scotland on Oct 1, 2016. The group assembled to consider a cluster of three post-industrial shale oil bings: as an artwork, as a form with positive and negative aesthetic value, as a living landscape and an ecosystem, and as a national heritage site. The mounds tower over an agricultural landscape and local community. We wanted to talk about bings and mining and waste pile recovery schemes from the point of view of art and its ability to reveal divergent public interests. Furthermore we wanted to consider the bings as a unique living ecological habitat. By embracing an interdisciplinary network approach to the conflicted meanings of one specific post-industrial landscape, we intended to explore positive and negative aesthetics, ethics and moral philosophy to better understand how competing meanings reveal, complement or overshadow historic judgements, current perceptions and future values.

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### ***Contributors.***

Seminar contributors include Barbara Steveni and David Harding, internationally recognised artists who have been both witnesses to and participants in John Latham’s work at the bings during his life and his posthumous legacy. Craig Richardson and Barbra Harvie are substantively engaged with West Lothian bings and spoke on the issues from an arts (Richardson) and science (Harvie) point of view. Emily Brady and Pauline Phemister brought a philosophical view to the topic of environmental aesthetics (Brady) and ethics and metaphysics (Phemister). Artists Reiko Goto and Peter McCaughey spoke from the positions of ‘living things’, acknowledging both the local people and the wild nature that inhabitant the mounds, they both that have a fundamental claim to this bing cluster. Finally, the social scientist David Edwards spoke about the role of artists in opening up a question that other disciplines tend to close down.

### ***Background:***

In April 2016 a group of friends and colleagues assembled to walk to the top of a post industrial shale oil bing west of Edinburgh known as Greendykes and consider its meaning and value. After walking and talking and contemplating the views in all four directions, we found a small ravine and settled in for lunch. As we ate, a colleague provided an overview of Greendykes. It was assembled over 100 years and is more than 100 meters tall, it is a focal point for travellers moving east and west and north and south on the motorways and in trains. It is visible from flights in and out of Edinburgh airport. It is a monument to the worlds first shale oil industry. And yet, it is both a source of pride and shame for the surrounding communities including descendants of the miners that produced it.

[insert Fig. 1.01 here]

Taking turns speaking to our individual perceptions and initial understanding of the values that permeate the site the gathering of artists, and landscape architects, a biologist and a geologist as well as philosophers spoke to both positive and negative aesthetic sensibilities, the site's relationship to art history, its natural heritage status, the site as a monument to industrial labour and the early shale oil industry, the site as a biodiversity hotspot, the value of a mound of biodiversity in landscape dominated by agricultural crops. Recognising the range of conflictual dimensions the site catalysed Ross McLean suggested a conversation with Naomi Hennig and Ulrike Jordan former students who were curating an exhibition ['Context is Half the Work'](#) about the Artist's Placement Group (1966-1989) at Summerhall in Edinburgh (Hennig, Jordan, 2006) With support a seminar was organized (Fig. 1.01) to consider the full range of issues, but with a focus on John Latham's work at the bings through the lenses of arts and aesthetics, landscape, heritage, science and public interest

Our focus is the vast Greendykes bing (Fig. 1.02), as well as the Faucheldean bing and the smaller Niddry bing; all lie one mile south of the village of Winchburgh, ten miles west of Edinburgh. John Latham was employed through an Artist Placement Group residency at the Scottish Development Office (1975-76), during which he was asked to come up with a plan for dealing with the 'bings' of West Lothian. His response documented in a report (Latham, 1976) and artwork was to re-value various waste mounds as conceptual artwork and reflect on their material assembly as a social process sculpture that evolved over years. So in Latham's practice Greendyke's bing becomes 'Niddrie Woman.' Latham proposed that the aerial perspective of the forms are reminiscent of the torso of a dismembered woman<sup>1</sup>, the head at right angles to the body, one limb and the heart of the figure are completely separate from the body. Today the limb (Faucheldean) is understood as a recovered ecosystem known for its orchids, the heart (Niddry) is the focal point of a shale-aggregate mining operation, the torso and partially decapitated head remain scantily vegetated but celebrated for biodiversity counter-intuitively maintained by the disturbance of off-road vehicles. Parts of the cluster of bings are preserved as a monument to the world's first shale oil industry. It was declared a Scottish National Heritage Site in 1995, and later identified for its biodiverse mix of ground plants, trees, birds and insects in The West Lothian Biodiversity Action Plan: Oil Shale Bings, published in 2005.

[insert Fig. 1.02 here]

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## Seminar

### *Introduction.*

Ross McLean presents an overview of the bings and the meanings they carry in relation to the surrounding landscape, to outline how this context informs the three dimensions of the symposium, as; art and aesthetics, landscape and ecology, heritage and community. He describes the bings as an event, a historic performance of human labor a large overwhelming mass of material that is part of the everyday context for citizens in the nearby towns of Winchburgh and Kirkliston. He speaks of the bing's history, comparing and contrasting John Latham's strategy to define the bings as a 'process sculpture' (Latham 1976), the assignment of national Heritage status based upon it being "one of the few intact spent-shale bings left in Scotland," and finally Barbara Harvie's biodiversity Action plan and its current conservation status. He highlights that

from a landscape planning perspective the bings conflictual meanings challenge conventional planning designations, while raising the question of how to resolve its future use when it presents such an irresolvable set of often contradictory meanings, an issue he identifies as being synonymous with many other post industrial sites (McLean 2019). Ross also provides an overview of the changing face of Winchburgh the focal point of a £1 billion regional development plan that intends to reshape a historic mining village into a commuter town serving the City of Edinburgh. This will include relocating the historic High street and establishing a public space / public art plan (REF) illustrated by ideas for large formal sculptures.

Tim Collins offers a “then and now” overview of Greendykes bing that considers at how the context and competing meanings of the site have changed. From a wet marshy land chosen for its defensive potential as the site of Niddry castle in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century; to the focal point of a 17<sup>th</sup> century book on [‘The Scottish Gard’ner’](#) by John Reid (1683), a third generation gardener at Niddry Castle. By the 18<sup>th</sup> Century the castle and gardens are in ruins. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Scotsman James ‘Paraffin’ Young develops a patent to retort paraffin wax from shale oil and the bings as a by-product begin to rise. The populations of local towns grow exponentially at the turn of the century when hundreds of houses were built for the miners and their families. After the first world war crude oil replaces oil shale and labour unrest ensues. The modern history of the bings as a cultural icon begins with John Latham’s 1975 project to reconceptualise the bings as a dismembered post industrial woman. Followed by a [highly redacted public document](#) that establishes Greendykes bing as an important public monument in 1995 (Historic Environment Scotland designation as Scheduled Monument SM6186); and then in Barbara Harvie’s biodiversity study in 2005. Collins argues that the site has multiple competing meanings. It is mountain of waste; it is a testimony to labour and the industrial economy; the scale and mass deny the natural topography; it is a gendered earth art, a post-industrial megalithic art a symbol of abuse; it is a scheduled monument; it is a biodiverse niche in a monocrop landscape; finally, it is an ecology that offers material resistance to any attempt to reclaim, restore, reuse, or recycle.

### ***Art and Aesthetics.***

Craig Richardson is an artist and author. He has been reflecting upon and writing about John Latham’s work in Scotland for a decade or more. He presents an illustrated overview providing insights into the development of the work, starting with a historic overview of the Artist Placement group process and method, then going on to describe Latham’s work on the Niddrie women and its relationship to the Westwood bing also known as the ‘the Five Sisters’. He characterises the latter as a simple Duchampian declaration because the form resembled Latham’s ongoing studio work with books; here resembling five open books placed spine up. He suggests that the Niddrie Women is a much more complicated problem similar in some ways to Westwood bing but one that Latham saw as in need of additional creative interventions, perhaps due to the challenges of ‘seeing’ the form without an aerial vantage point.

Craig helps us to understand the APG Placements as a unique joining together of two very different production capacities, the industrial managerial capacity and the artistic capacity for organisation and imagination. The artists would work to an open brief developing a feasibility study once engaged with their placement body (Richardson, 2015). The artists would produce proposals, reports and artworks as they saw fit. In Latham’s case he responded to a specific request from the planners to consider the massive material condition of the bings, which were widely considered a

symbol of pollution and a monument that was considered shameful to many. Craig outlines Latham's approach which includes consideration of the land-forms through aerial studies. This is where the disembodied women first becomes legible. In contrast the form of the 'Five Sisters' composed of rising ramps of dumped waste that move outward from a central point is legible from the ground. It was easy to "take in" the latter while the former challenges the viewer to assemble the relationship between concept and form. In response Latham began to develop a series of maquettes, a massive cruciform book form was conceptualised for the top of Niddrie woman, which would include an internal stairway with a detailed history of the site, its community of labour and the artist's approach. Craig confirms the import of this work with notes from Terry Measham's 1976 publication and the purchase of the 'Five Sisters' documentation by the Tate Museum (Measham, 1976). He closed with an overview of the impact Latham's thinking had on the Scottish Office Planners and the written support they provided for his work effort. Craig offered some insights on the first of the scheduled monuments at the Five Sisters, describing how Latham was invited north to testify in relationship to the landowners initial resistance to that plan, up until the point that everyone had gathered in Scotland for the hearings, at which point they ceased all resistance to that idea. Craig continues his research on John Latham and the West Lothian Bings, with a new chapter in a book coming out next year (Richardson 2018).

Emily Brady is a philosopher working on aesthetics, ethics and the environment. She speaks about the idea of intergenerational ethics and the role of art at Greendykes – Niddrie Woman. She starts with an overview of current research on intergenerational aesthetics and the way the concept links through to climate change, to ideas about the anthropocene and long-term intergenerational consequences of human action, such as the Greendyke bing, arguing that we are in a position where we have to embrace the ideas of the past, the conditions and values of the present and try to imagine future conditions and scenarios. How does the aesthetic idea of a large waste mound evolve over time and in relationship to changes to context? She cautions that this is thinking well beyond the picturesque, the landscape aesthetic tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The current aesthetic position focuses upon the dynamic aesthetic qualities of the natural environment; the viewer is immersed or situated in the field of aesthetic appreciation. This is about an intertwining of geological, ecological and sentient others in our field of experience and appreciation. In this case (following her reading of Craig Richardson) art radically reconceptualises the land through Latham's interests, maquettes, plans and reports. Over the last fifty years the bing has become a mixed, modified environment: a recreational zone, a tip site, a place filled with individual histories where the past resonates with contemporary issues. The place is ecologically generative but has also been socially and economically generative for generations of families. The bing functions as an essential material condition, a view point where we take in the surrounding countryside, with its agriculture, infrastructure and changing communities all visible. The fundamental aesthetic problem is how to reimagine it for future generations?

### ***Dialogue***

Barbara Steveni and David Harding are artists and long-term friends; David provided support for the APG efforts in Scotland. Barbara begins by talking about the Scottish placement as exemplary; it has lasting impact and import. In her opinion when Latham suggested the cruciform sculpture she felt he was giving in to the commercial premise of sculpture as a tourist outlook integrating the history of the industrial process in the design. In conversation with David Harding just prior to the seminar, they had some

new ideas about the work. David was also against the sculpture on the top, he felt the bings were an important sculptural form as they were. Driving by the shale bings on the way to the seminar Barbara asked why they weren't better recognized today in the era of ecology and environment. Why were they kept as a monument without reference to the artist? David suggests that if there were a marker, the significant sculptural form that Latham originally proposed it would have helped establish the work as something important, something special, and perhaps more importantly activating the Duchampian shift from waste to essential artefact.

As Steveni and Harding conclude their discussion; Tim Collins asks to step back from their considerations of the sculptural form never built, and their musing on its imagined impact on the historic record of the artists work. Comparing the work to radical artistic landscape forms of the same time, such as 'Time Landscape' (NYC Parks, 2018) a native forest planted in New York City by Alan Sonfist (1978) and Robert Morris's 'Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)' (King County, 2018) an abandoned quarry site simply covered in grass (1979). These are land/concept artworks that are extreme, simple forms. Yet these works have secured international recognition and lasting impact. He asked why is it that Scotland has not claimed this work, developed in 1975, for its similar radical concept and unique difference? David replies with an overview of other artwork in Scotland that is recognised by artists all over the world, but simply ignored here at home and not represented in any of the important national collections. It is hard to generate international interest when something of import is not recognised in the Scottish National Gallery.

### ***Landscape and Ecology.***

Reiko Goto Collins is an artist that has developed artwork with and about flora and fauna for over twenty years. She was involved in a series of art-based research projects while a research fellow at Carnegie Mellon University, in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, working on a post industrial steel mill slag mound similar to Greendykes in scale and form if not material. Her Pittsburgh work focused on plants and habitats found on that mound and would eventually involve extensive work with a botanist and a soil scientist. She uses this experience to provide a counterpoint to the West Lothian bings. She describes an initial project titled 'Equation' considering the name, the meaning, the experience and the values attributed to the various plants growing wild on that site. Following that between 1996 and 2000 what came to be known as the [Nine Mile Run Greenway project](#) received full funding. A team of artists were to develop research, concepts and support new values related to restoration ecology through community dialogues<sup>2</sup>. Reflecting on all of that, she clearly stated that the project's focus on ecological restoration and scientific knowledge to inform public interest "was all good, she loved playing amateur botanist" and working with everyone. But as the project finished up and she moved to the UK she started to ask questions; "is that all, is that the only way to engage nature?" She started writing and reading about empathy, considering its application to non-human others and plants in particular. She outlines simple questions: "We need to know who you are, what you do, what you like and what you don't like... We might consider that intelligent animals express comfort and discomfort, what about plants and trees? They do not have the same kind of senses and feelings but... they do have senses that respond to heat, humidity and changes to the air and the soil. We can perceive the physical state of all living things." Reiko argues that these kinds of ideas are emergent today, but asks what does it mean to embrace living things through empathy when we imagine the future of places like Greendykes bing?

Barbra Harvie is a plant ecologist with specific interest in post industrial and recovering landscapes. She describes Greendykes bing as a large disturbed succession site where nothing is planned. It is a mountain composed of a waste byproduct from the process of using heat to extract crude oil (paraffin) from deep mined oil-bearing shale. Yet it is one of eight major habitats as described in the West Lothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan: Oil Shale Bings (Harvie, 2005). It includes many locally rare orchids and old agricultural plants as well. Faucheldean bing just north of Greendykes/Niddrie woman is a similar shale oil bing that has benefited from a bit more time, less disturbance and has considerable vegetation, it is renowned for its rare and wild orchid population. Other rare plants on the Greendykes bing include mosses, bryophytes and lichens (Fig. 1.03). There is also a range of important insects; butterflies and beetles as well as a long list of birds, which is significant given the fact that this large bing (158 acres) is a relative small component in the larger surrounding landscape. Harvie concludes with a quote from the noted biologist and advocate for restoration ecology Prof Tony Bradshaw (1926-2008). In his President's address to the British Ecological Society in December 1982 he made this comment making it clear what can be learned by studies like Harvie's of the West Lothian bings and other post industrial sites in Scotland and beyond. "Ecosystems that appear on derelict land without human assistance, they are not planted but are of considerable interest. They tell us about processes of ecosystem reconstruction and also about natural ecosystem development" (Bradshaw, 1983).

[insert Fig. 1.03 here]

### ***Dialogue***

Wallace Heim and Simon Burton were acquaintances when they gathered for this shared discussion. Simon reinforces Dr Harvie's study describing Greendykes bing from a birders perspective. He claims it is an exemplary site, the best birding in the UK is always at the edges or margins, places where industry, practical land management and utilitarian values haven't given way to 'natural' conditions and the kind of significant disinterest that produces species richness. Greendykes bing is embedded in a region of high value soils, an advantageous agricultural landscape that is primarily managed in terms of monocrops; it is a biodiversity oasis of sorts. Heim commented that the morning has been about thinking about landscape, monumentality and art, but part of this has been about reconceptualising what waste is. This site is interesting because it is not toxic, it is not leaching chemicals, it is not radioactive it is a waste that seems approachable. Thinking about Reiko's discussion she was reminded that artists all over the world have been working on what it means to reclaim, remediate and restore the meaning and value of post industrial landscapes originally conceived of as waste. She talked about the delight and purity of a process where things regenerate if we just leave them alone; species come in, seeds are blow in and deposited by birds, life begins to establish itself on the surface. She concludes by suggesting that waste may not be the right word for the bings, they may be something we haven't found a use for or assigned a value to yet.

Barbra Harvie responds by saying these are the only deep mining shale bings in western Europe; these particular bings are unique forms, sculptures created by the multiple hands of the men that mined and retorted the shale. Prof Francoise Wemelsfelder<sup>3</sup> of Scotland's Rural College comments on nature's agency and the fact that Barbra pointed out that plants 'decide' to come to the bings and then compete for space. This is one way we talk about plants and animals as sentient beings. She



references the German forester Peter Wohlleben's 'The Hidden Life of Trees' (2016) where he describes nature's agency; describing trees that nurture their offspring and have socially supported networks. She then raises a question that went unanswered on the day but is worth thinking about; "if we were to accept the bings as sentient nature, would it challenge our claim of the bings as artwork?" The authors would gently respond by suggesting that the problem is one of locating our aesthetic attention in the greater generative forces of the bings ecology and understanding that there is no finite artifact, but rather a performed aesthetic expression, a networked agency of generative recovering organisms. This is nature's equivalent of a complex orchestra playing Vivaldi's Four Seasons. The performance on any given day is the artwork.

### ***Heritage and Community.***

Peter McCaughey is an internationally recognised public artist and arts planner. Thirty-five years after John Latham was invited to be an incidental artist in the Scottish Office, Peter was invited to Winchburgh by a mix of public art interests and property developers. He spent time with young and old, gathering knowledge trying to get at what people think and feel about the place. Peter talks at length about his interests and processes of creation, dialogue and his unique democratic approach to exhibition/reporting before settling into a description of his award winning work in Winchburgh. He begins by acknowledging respect for the scientists in the room then declares that he is suspicious of scientific neutrality and the tradition of framing a hypothesis and finding an answer. In contrast he describes his own artist practice as one of coming in loaded with ideas and opinions, while maintaining that he is a good listener. His presentation focuses on meaning and interpretation, working with interpretation, through the interpretation and as the interpreter. Deeply involved with the community his efforts were presented in an outdoor cinema set up in the village. This community dialogue resulted in criticism and proximate conversations about what was, what is and what the future might hold. Part of his work includes a film developed by working closely with a retired local baker in the village who knew the miners by name and nick-name. Preparing to present this video narrative Peter challenged the seminar audience asking them to speak the names along with the baker. He argues this was as close to an embodied relationship with the Greendyke/Niddry bings we would have that day. He wanted us all to grapple with the individuals responsible for placing it there; the combined voices of the audience speaking was a very powerful way to end his talk.

Pauline Phemister is a philosopher and an authority on Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716 ). She has just completed an important new book that charts a new metaphysics 'Liebniz and the Environment' (2016). Pauline speaks about ethics and probes different ways that we understand the places and times that shape how we understand our place in the world. She starts by saying that Greendykes bing is part of the self-identity of anyone that grew up with it. Bings have a thing-history that becomes part of the human narrative of communities. Living beside them, playing upon them alternately loving and hating these huge mounds of shale. She argued that the bings shape what people think, how they act and what they believe. They shape the ways people define themselves. The people and the proximate communities would be quite different if the proximate bings had never existed. Part of the challenge is learning how to live in their shadow, how to forgive the wrongs of the industrial past and being grateful for what they provide now and in the future. The challenge is to learn to live with love with acceptance and perhaps appreciation for the particularity of that place. Learning to live without resentment; to live in a way that heals past wrongs. If we respect the past that had to be the way it was in order for us to be the way we are today.

That understanding, that taking account of our own history and feelings allows us to move into the future in a positive way. She closed by saying: “when decisions are being made people making them would do well to keep the ideal of beauty as order, diversity and variety in mind. Would do well to attend to the connections between beauty, pleasure, love and care. To be conscious of the need to respect the past and aware of the interconnectedness of things that bind our identity to theirs and theirs to ours.”

### ***A critical review of the day.***

David Edwards is a social scientist at Forest Research who works on forest monitoring, evaluation and impact modeling to inform recreational use policies and experimental deliberative approaches to public discourse around forest meaning and value. He has a secondary interest in arts-led dialogue as an alternative to the instrumental approaches of environmental valuation and decision making (Edwards et al, 2017). He reviews the seminar’s focus on aesthetics and ecology, heritage and community; he suggests that missing from the day were the economic interests and perhaps the recreational interests that would normally be involved in a policy discussion about landscape use and reuse options. He argues that the fundamental question was how to continue the story of the bings, how to build historically significant moments into a future public space? An economist would run a cost benefit analysis to figure out which scenarios maximize human wellbeing and recreational value. They often consider the likely cause and effect on house prices, alongside the relative value of recreation onsite versus offsite.

A social scientist would do a stakeholder analysis, asking who is engaged with the bings and who else should be at the table if there is going to be a public debate about future forms and functions, uses and activities on a site like Greendykes. Referring back to the seminar presentation and discussion David says that where economists and social scientists try to bring closure and solve problems; the arts and humanities tend to open things up, to be strategically provocative and experimental. Sometimes discovering problems and meanings that were previously invisible or ignored. He argues that changes to concepts, meanings, relationships and values can have an impact on institutional structures. Artist’s can inform the methods of other disciplines as well as the operative values of managers and decision makers. David points out that this was evident throughout the seminar. He went on to suggest that empathy is another idea that flowed throughout the day and is part of the experience and training of artists who go into situations and begin to unpack and play with a range of positions in a critical and creative way – maintaining critical distance but paying close attention to what unfolds and how it unfolds during ensuing interaction.

### ***Conclusion.***

In conclusion, by embracing an interdisciplinary network this seminar opened up the conflicted meanings of one specific post-industrial landscape, raising questions through aesthetics, ethics, scientific assessment, arts and heritage approaches that are relevant to these kind of sites. Latham’s work highlights the inadequacies of planning designations when confronted with sites with complex industrial pasts. Through Niddrie Woman he contributed to the sites conflicted values by re-defining the bings as a work of art, as a ‘process sculpture’ that opened up a discourse about the sites cultural heritage. Latham’s work highlights that conflicted meanings are brought about by seemingly contradictory values placed upon post-industrial sites. For instance, this specific site is officially designated as a waste landscape, as the industrial by-product of aggregate spoil, yet simultaneously identified as an artwork, as a cultural artefact worthy of preservation under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, while being

recognised as a significant component of regional biodiversity (Fig. 1.04), which Harvie identifies as offering a unique habitat not found elsewhere in Britain or Western Europe. While the seminar used a specific post-industrial landscape to bring focus to interdisciplinary perspectives, this site is synonymous with issues prevalent in many similar post industrial sites, falling under the broad designation of waste landscapes. However, the compelling quality of these sites is how they simultaneously encapsulate both abandonment and opportunity, decay and growth, the artificial and the natural, history and erasure, as a compelling entanglement between seemingly contradictory conditions, which defy easy categorisation within conventional spatial typologies or planning designations. Yet as reflected in the interdisciplinary perspectives outlined in the seminar, these sites are places of latent potential, where they can be; robust structural complexes that offer a myriad of spatial experiences and structural re-appropriations; imbued with a sense of open-endedness, vibrancy, and opportunity that traditional public space often lacks; containers of rich ecological habitats and exotic species, as a spontaneous nature that evokes a sense of the wild; being places for social appropriation and participation, for communities to emerge with shared values and aims.

[insert Fig. 1.04 here]

The question that arises in this conceptualisation is that if such post industrial sites have complex, conflicting and often contradictory values, while also being considered to have unique ecological and cultural dimensions, then what framework of appreciation would more adequately respond to these contextual realities? The seminar allowed us to not only reflect on the conflicted presence of this specific post industrial landscape, but suggest ideas that might inform a progressive framework of appreciation. Brady argues that the aesthetic questions got at through immersion, not panoramic survey, allow us to appreciate the generative performative nature of the site that defines the aesthetic experience, which allows us to align experience with the generative presence of the sites spontaneous nature, which Harvie identifies as including the transgressive presence of motorcycles and four wheeled vehicles that have a positive impact on spontaneous planting through ground disturbance. Goto and Wiemersfelder speak to the emergence of a new kind of empathy with non-human others, which upsets our predominant sense of human entitlement and value. McCaughey sees the artist's role as drawing out intricate human responses and attachments to such places, identifies with a living history that can help re-invest meaning with sites of abandonment, while Pheminster helps us to appreciate what it means to become human in the shadow of a site like this, how it changes us and how we change it through our proximate actions and interests.

In Edwards critical recapitulation of the seminar, he suggests that the cause and effect of an artist's interest is best understood in comparison to disciplines that want to solve problems and close down issues. This reflects Latham's position, and almost four decades on, reiterates the need to open progressive dialogue about how we respond to complex post industrial sites. The interdisciplinary seminar allowed us to open up a range of comparative perspectives, as a starting point in considering how this range of appreciative frameworks could potentially inform, or at least identify with the need for, a more multidimensional appreciative framework to better engage these complex landscapes. Perhaps it is Francoise Wemelsfelder's provocation about the bings as sentient nature that provides the most interesting place to begin. If we consider the greater generative forces of the bings ecology as the focal point of our aesthetic interest;

to fully grasp the idea that there is no finite artefact, but rather a performed aesthetic expression, reflecting a networked agency of generative recovering organisms and the idea of nature performing as a complex bio-orchestral ensemble, then perhaps we are getting at something of critical importance. This is perhaps vital in a land where Charles Jencks' occupies the front lawn of the National Galleries of Scotland and his efforts at Northumberlandia and the Crawick Multiverse socially redeem those who wasted the landscape in the first place.

### **Film Credits**

Video production by: Dave Rushton, Summerhall TV, Assembly Edit by Claudia Domingues, Summerhall TV, Final editing by Tim Collins and Russell Beard. Film production received funding support from Creative Scotland and Summerhall, Edinburgh, with in-kind support from University of Edinburgh and Collins & Goto Studio.

### **Contributors**

**Ross Mclean** is a lecturer and programme director of the MSc Landscape Architecture and programme co-leader of the MFA in Art Space & Nature based at Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh. His research interests focus on landscape aesthetics, comparative practices across landscape design and environmental art, and strategic design of post-industrial landscapes. He has recently completed a book, *Transformative Ground: A Field Guide to the Post Industrial Landscape*, due for publication in Summer 2019 by Routledge. His work was the subject of a documentary short film *Plastic Man*, produced by artist Yulia Kovanova, which was shortlisted for the Scottish Bafta short documentary film category in 2018.

**Tim Collins** is a principal at the Collins & Goto studio. He has worked across art, science and philosophy, developing artwork and research related to nature and post-industrial public space for over twenty years. As a senior research fellow at Carnegie Mellon University he led work on public interest research and planning on Nine Mile Run and 3 Rivers 2<sup>nd</sup> Nature in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. More recently he has taken an interest in Caledonian forests, moorland and mine spoil sites in Scotland. Notable publications include: Collins, T. Goto Collins, R. Edwards, D. 2017. 'A Critical Forest Art Practice'. In *Landscape Research Journal* (Vol. 43 #2), and Collins, T. 2010. '3 Rivers 2nd Nature 2000-2005, Water, Land & Dialogue', In Carney, L.S., and Pageot, E-A, a special issue on Landscape, Cultural Spaces, Ecology. *RACAR, Revue d'art Canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, Vol 35 Issue 3.

**Craig Richardson** is a Professor and author working at the University of Loughborough. Craig has been actively writing about John Latham and his work on the shale oil bings since 2006 when he received an Arts and Humanities Research Council, Landscape and Environment award to study Latham's in the Scottish Office; with a specific focus on his work on the West Lothian shale oil bings. He has an ongoing interest in Latham's legacy and the relationship between art and post industrial heritage sites. Notable publications include: Richardson, C. 2018. 'Monuments to the period we live in', in *Hybrid Practices: Art in Collaboration with Science and Technology in the Long 1960s* (Eds. David Cateforis, Steven Duval, Shepherd Steiner), and Richardson, C. 2012 'Waste to Monument: John Latham's Niddrie Woman: Art & Environment',

in Tate Papers, no.17, Spring 2012. [www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/17/waste-to-monument-john-lathams-niddrie-woman](http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/17/waste-to-monument-john-lathams-niddrie-woman)

**Emily Brady** holds the Susanne M. and Melbern G. Glasscock Director's Chair at the Glasscock Center for Humanities Research at Texas A&M University. Previously Emily was Professor of Environment and Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. Her research and teaching spans aesthetics and philosophy of art, environmental ethics, eighteenth-century philosophy, environmental humanities, and animal studies. Her philosophical approach moves between the historical and contemporary, seeking to reinterpret past thinking about nature, environment and the arts for a contemporary context. She is especially interested in trying to understand how aesthetic and ethical values interact, the character of aesthetic experience and judgment, and the role of imagination in that experience. Notable publications include: Brady, E. Brook, I. and Prior, J. 2018. *Between Nature and Culture: The Aesthetics of Modified Environments*, and Brady, E. 2013 *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature*.

**Barbara Steveni** an artist in London conceived and co-founded the 'Artist Placement Group' (APG) in the UK in 1966, described by many as one of the most radical art and society experiments of the 1960s. The original concept was to expand the reach of art and artists into organisations of all kinds (commercial, industrial, and governmental), and at all levels, including decision-making, and on a basis equivalent to any other engaged specialist. Current interest in the relevance of APG's methodology and legacy has led to the first APG retrospective – *The Individual and the Organisation: Artist Placement Group 1966-79* at Raven Row Gallery, London, 2012, followed by *Context is Half the Work – A Partial History of the Artist Placement Group* at Kunstraum Kreuzberg / Bethanien, Berlin in 2015, then Edinburgh in 2016. For more information see - <http://flattimeho.org.uk/apg/>

**David Harding** is an artist in Glasgow who has a long friendship with Barbara Steveni's and provided key support for John Latham's work in Scotland. David has a primary interest in the contemporary development of public art and social/political art in both practice and education; in practice, in terms of his own work and that of other artists; in education, in terms of how those practices can be taught in art schools; in particular through experiences working on the Art and Social Contexts course at Dartington College of Arts and then as founding Head of the Environmental Art course at Glasgow School of Art. Working with Ross Birrell David recently presented 'Tryptych' at the Edinburgh Art Festival 2018 and projects for Documenta 14 (2017). For more information see [www.davidharding.net](http://www.davidharding.net)

**Reiko Goto Collins** is an environmental artist, author and designer, working in the Collins and Goto Studio. She has a long term interest in nature, habitat and post industrial urban sites. She is currently focused on the development of new work dealing with empathic relationships, sentience and collaboration with an Irish Cob The Darkness aka An Dorchadas a horse native to Britain and Ireland. She is also a participant in the women's group, the Council for Uncertain Human Futures at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh. Working with Tim she has recently developed *The Caledonian Decoy* an installation that explores the time and space of a forest. In 2017 it was exhibited in the Intermedia Gallery at CCA, Glasgow and video elements were presented at *Future Stratigraphy* at the University of Sydney, Australia in 2017. Plans are underway to exhibit a touring version of *Plein Air* at Appalachian State University, North Carolina in 2019. Notable

publications include: Goto Collins, R. and Collins, T. 2017. Imagination and Empathy – Artists with Trees’ In *Participatory Research in More-than-Human Worlds*. Eds. Bastian, M. Jones, O. Roe, E. and Goto Collins, R. Collins, T. 2012. Art and LIVING Things – The ethical, aesthetic impulse. In Brady, E. And Phemister, P. (Eds.) *Transformative Values: human environment relations in theory and practice*.

**Barbra Harvie** is a lecturer in environmental ecology at Scotland's Rural College (SRUC). Her background is in plant ecology with particular interest in the mechanisms and processes of succession, ecological restoration and biodiversity. Her main research has on the colonisation and successional development of vegetation on post-industrial waste (using the oil-shale bings of West Lothian as the main study sites); from the initial entrapment of seeds on a sterile substrate to the structure of the resulting plant communities. She is currently involved with The Blackland Research Group a collaboration between researchers from SRUC, the University of Edinburgh and the crofting community of North Uist to ‘Reinvigorate the Ridges’. The project experiments with sustainable use of seaweeds as fertilizer, microbial and macro invertebrate action in blackland soils, blackland soil evolution and dynamics, as well as crop trials and management techniques. Notable publications include: Adediran, G.A. Ngwenya, B.T. Mosselmans, F.W. Heal, K.V. and Harvie, B.A. (2015) Mixed planting with leguminous plant outperforms bacteria in promoting growth of a phytoremediator. In the *International Journal of Phytoremediation* 18(7) Pp. 720-729. and Harvie, B.A. and Hobbs, R.J. 2013 Shale Bings in Central Scotland: From Ugly Blots on the Landscape to Cultural and Biological Heritage. In *Novel Ecosystems: Intervening in the New Ecological World Order* (RJ Hobbs, ES Higgs & CM Hall eds), Chapter 35.

**Wallace Heim** writes, researches and teaches in the median zone where culture, art and human performance meet the other-than-human, meet nature. In these conjunctions of the animate, the material and the elemental, new forms of human experience can emerge; new modes of understanding and action can take shape. She analyses the experience of art works and social practices, to consider how events shape social and ecological contexts, and to develop critical frameworks appropriate to the experience of culture in the time of climate instability. Her academic slant is philosophical, but she works across disciplines including performance and theatre studies, arts criticism, geography, politics and environmental studies. Her current work is as the writer and producer of ‘the sea cannot be depleted’, a spoken word and sound piece for online and radio broadcast about the sea, about how a sense of place evolves with the changing forces of the sea and about the military dumping of depleted uranium into the Solway Firth. Notable publications include: Heim, W. and Margolies, E. 2014. *Landing Stages*. Selections from the Ashden Directory 2000 – 2014

**Simon Burton** is one of many amateur ornithologist all over the world that make a significant contribution to that field through the rigour and impact of his interest and practice recording his experiences with all things birds. Simon has been licensed in the UK for the use of mist nets to capture birds, record their condition and place RSPB approved bird leg rings on them for scientific tracking purposes. Recently moving to the oak woods and prairies bioregion of Brazos Country Texas in the United States, Simon has taken Audubon training in US Audubon bird banding and has established a relationship with like-minded amateur/expert ornithologists in his area and has applied for a federal bird banding permit from the United States Geological Society. In his spare time he has returned to his early degree in philosophy working with Emily Brady as

they think about aesthetics, ethics and the more than human otherness of birds. Notable publications include: Burton, S. and Brady, E. 2016. What is it Like to be a Bird?: Epistemic Humility and Human-Animal Relations,' In *Animal Ethics in the Age of Humans*, Bovenkirk, B. and Keulartz, J. eds

**Peter McCaughey** is a senior lecturer in the Environmental Sculpture and Environmental Art programme at Glasgow School of Art; he is also the Lead Artist and Director of Wave Particle focused on urban regeneration arts projects, public art commissions and various levels of creative consultation. Wave Particle is currently working as Lead Artists / Curators of Scotland's contribution to the 16th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. In 2006 Peter worked with CALA homes, on the Winchburgh Future Project. Peter is currently Vice Chair of the Board of WASPS Artists Studio, has served as Vice President of the Scottish Artists Union, is a Senior Lecturer in the Sculpture and Environmental Art Department of the Glasgow School of Art and teaches mapping tactics across the UK and Europe. For more information see <https://portfolio.waveparticle.co.uk>

**Pauline Phemister** returned to the department of Philosophy (where she originally studied) at University of Edinburgh in 2005. Prior to that she held a British Academy Post-doctoral Fellowship at the University of Oxford and taught at the Universities of Nebraska-Lincoln and Liverpool. She is author of *Leibniz and the Natural World* (2005), *The Rationalists: Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz* (2006) and *Leibniz and the Environment* (2016) She is a co-investigator on the AHRC research project, *Caring for the Future through Ancestral Time*, and local co-ordinator of the CHCI Humanities for the Environment project, *Uncertain Human Future*. Recently the Royal Society of Edinburgh gave her funding to support an international network to consider research questions and methods relevant to "Living Organisms and Their Choices". Notable publications include: Phemister, P. 2017. 'Substance and Force or Why it Matters what we Think. In *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp526-546

**David Edwards** is a project leader of the Social and Economic Research Group at Forest Research. He leads on two related agendas: the interfaces between science, policy and practice, and the social and cultural values and meanings associated with forests. He manages the FC-funded research programme 'Integrating research for policy and practice' which seeks to understand and enhance the impact of forest-related research by improving integration between researchers and the quality of knowledge exchange with decision-makers and land managers across the public and private sectors. He has developed and applied a range of frameworks, methods and tools to assess the cultural ecosystem services associated with forests. These include: a) social and cultural indicators for monitoring and evaluation of forestry policies and programmes; b) modelling long-term impacts of changes in management regimes on the recreational value of forests across Europe, and c) deliberative processes with environmental artists, forest managers and local communities to create new public discourses around the cultural meanings and values associated with ancient semi-natural woodland. Notable publications include: Edwards, D., Collins, T. and Goto, R. 2016. An arts-led dialogue to elicit shared, plural and cultural values of ecosystems. *Ecosystem Services* 21: 319–328, and Edwards, D. 2015 Cultural and Spiritual Values. In: *The State of Europe's Forests 2015*. Forest Europe. pp207-8

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<sup>1</sup> In conversations with Barbara Steveni the notion of this 'dismembered' woman was a point of discussion and some tension between her and John Latham. If we view the work from an ecofeminist perspective the dismembered woman is a symbol that refers to woman but also the fertility goddess sculptures of early European cultures. The significant dismemberment of this fertility symbol relates to the resource extraction of the shale oil mining process. This narrative is further developed by reports that Latham's ashes were scattered on the heart, or the Niddry bing where mining operations have now further scattered his ashes all over



Scotland. Perhaps completing the cycle of life, death and rejuvenation in a way that is unique, rigorous and significant in ways that few artists have matched.

<sup>2</sup> For more information about the Nine Mile Run Greenway Project see <http://collinsandgoto.com>. There are links to the original website and its research and outputs under projects and various journal articles and book chapters under publications.

<sup>3</sup> Professor Wemelsfelder develops scientific approaches for the study of animals as whole sentient beings (i.e. as subjects rather than objects), bringing insights from philosophy of mind and social psychology and anthropology into the study of animal emotion.